April 2002

# ALABAMA CHESS ANTICS

*Robert J. Fischer - Caissa's most tragic genius*

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER by Bill Melvin

If Alabama has a chess season, then it is clearly the first four months of the year. The ACF web site (www.cis.uab.edu/info/faculty/sloan/ACF/) maintained by Dr. Ken Sloan contains a calendar of upcoming events. Adults have as many upcoming Alabama weekend events between February and April as the rest of the year combined:

Henry Bird Open (Birmingham) – February 9
Queen of Hearts (Montgomery) – February 16-17
Irish Bear Open (Birmingham) – March 16
April Showers Open (Birmingham) – April 20

For scholastic players, nearly all of the years' tournaments are concentrated over these few months. Here are the scholastic tournaments on the calendar:

Hoover Scholastics (Birmingham) – February 2
Kids Rock'n Round-Robins (Birmingham) – February 10
Hampton Cove Scholastic (Huntsville) – March 2
Kids Rock'n Round-Robin (Birmingham) – March 10
State Scholastic Team (Birmingham) – March 16
Kids Rock'n Round-Robin (Birmingham) – April 14
State Scholastic Individual (Birmingham) – April 20

A quick glance at the above calendar of tournaments shows an interesting trend: 9 of the 11 events are being held in the Birmingham area. The purpose of pointing this out is twofold:

1) Organizers need to use the valuable free advertising resource of the ACF web site. Send tournament information into Dr. Sloan and you've just advertised to lots of folks like myself. I check the ACF site before Chess Life nowadays since Chess Life has raised rates and many organizers have elected not to buy ads.

2) Alabama needs more organizers to run local tournaments. Anyone can become a certified USCF tournament director and hold local tournaments. It has never been easier to take the first step to become a certified TD. The application form is on the U.S. Chess web site at:

http://www.uschess.org/about/forms/CERTIFIEDTDFORM.pdf

See you at the upcoming chess tournaments. Better study and practice. Your opponents will be gunning for you!

# **GAO** Chess Tournament * August 4-5, 2001 * Montgomery, AL

By: **Caesar Lawrence**

**The 2001 edition of the Greater Alabama Open Chess Tournament was very exciting.** The players came from far and near – Texas, Florida, Tennessee, Georgia and various Alabama cities. In the Open section, the guys from Georgia (**Stephen Muhammad and Chris Chambers**) took home the honor of GAO Champion(s). In the Reserve section, **Miles Melvin** played **Richard Faust** to a draw in the last round to claim part of the top prize(s). The reserve section had a scholastic appeal due to some of our new, promising young players' participation. I do believe that the GAO helped them in becoming better, stronger chess players.

The prize fund was paid in full. Players that finished in the money are:

| **OPEN** | | | **RESERVE** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st | $187.50 | Stephen Muhammad | 1st | $125.00 | Richard Faust |
| | 187.50 | Chris Chambers | | $125.00 | Miles Melvin |
| Class A | 100.00 | Robert Pruitt | Class D | 75.00 | Juan Rodriguez |
| | 100.0 | Kirk Petty | | | |
| | | | U1200 | 75.00 | Riley Lane |
| U1800 | 100.00 | Gerald Wheeler | | | |

**Congratulations to all of the winners and thanks to all of the players for playing in the GAO!!!**

*Let's Play Chess...*

# GREATER ALABAMA OPEN (GAO) 2001 - OPEN

| # | PLAYER NAME | ST | PreRate | PstRate | Rd1 | Rd2 | Rd3 | Rd4 | Rd5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | STEPHEN MUHAMMAD | GA | 2377 | 2374 | W-9 | W-4 | W-3 | D-2 | D-5 | 4 |
| 2 | CHRIS CHAMBERS | GA | 2132 | 2144 | W-10 | D-11 | W-6 | D-1 | W-3 | 4 |
| 3 | BILL MELVIN | AL | 2200 | 2200 | W-7 | W-5 | L-1 | W-9 | L-2 | 3 |
| 4 | RICHARD PRICE | AL | 2128 | 2117 | W-12 | L-1 | D-11 | D-6 | W-8 | 3 |
| 5 | ROBERT PRUITT | AL | 1969 | 1978 | W-13 | L-3 | H---- | W-11 | D-1 | 3 |
| 6 | KIRK PETTY | AL | 1900 | 1910 | D-8 | W-14 | L-2 | D-4 | W-9 | 3 |
| 7 | CAESAR LAWRENCE | AL | 1833 | 1825 | L-3 | L-13 | W-14 | H---- | W-11 | 2.5 |
| 8 | GERALD WHEELER | AL | 1689 | 1725 | D-6 | L-9 | W-13 | W-10 | L-4 | 2.5 |
| 9 | TIM BOND | AL | 1903 | 1901 | L-1 | W-8 | W-10 | L-3 | L-6 | 2 |
| 10 | GILES D' SOUZA | AL | 1795 | 1789 | L-2 | W-12 | L-9 | L-8 | W-13 | 2 |
| 11 | GREG WILDER | AL | 1590 | 1609 | B---- | D-2 | D-4 | L-5 | L-7 | 2 |
| 12 | SCOTT HELTON | AL | 1783 | 1765 | L-4 | L-10 | B---- | D-13 | U---- | 1.5 |
| 13 | B. G. DENNISON | TX | 1709 | 1701 | L-5 | W-7 | L-8 | D-12 | L-10 | 1.5 |
| 14 | SIGURD SMITH | FL | 1622 | 1609 | H---- | L-6 | L-7 | U---- | U---- | 0.5 |

# GREATER ALABAMA OPEN (GAO) 2001 - RESERVE

| # | PLAYER NAME | ST | PreRate | PstRate | Rd1 | Rd2 | Rd3 | Rd4 | Rd5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | RICHARD FAUST | TN | 1463 | 1501 | W-5 | D-7 | W-12 | W-6 | D-2 | 4 |
| 2 | MILES MELVIN | AL | 1454 | 1490 | W-13 | W-8 | D-6 | W-7 | D-1 | 4 |
| 3 | JUAN RODRIGUEZ | FL | 1217 | 1275 | L-7 | W-13 | W-11 | D-4 | W-6 | 3.5 |
| 4 | RILEY LANE | GA | 1008 | 1082 | B---- | L-6 | W-10 | D-3 | X---- | 3.5 |
| 5 | CHRIS HILLARD | AL | 1253 | 1295 | L-1 | W-11 | L-7 | W-8 | W-10 | 3 |
| 6 | JOHN O'CONNER | AL | 1416 | 1400 | W-9 | W-4 | D-2 | L-1 | L-3 | 2.5 |
| 7 | KEVIN CRISLER | AL | 1404 | 1420 | W-3 | D-1 | W-5 | L-2 | F---- | 2.5 |
| 8 | TIMOTHY NUNNALLY | AL | 1370 | 1351 | W-10 | L-2 | H---- | L-5 | W-11 | 2.5 |
| 9 | BRYAN McMEEN | AL | 1225 | 1186 | L-6 | L-12 | W-13 | L-10 | B---- | 2 |
| 10 | JOSH BAKER | AL | 1189 | 1156 | L-8 | B---- | L-4 | W-9 | L-5 | 2 |
| 11 | JONATHAN KNOWLES | AL | 1125 | 1123 | W-12 | L-5 | L-3 | B---- | L-8 | 2 |
| 12 | JIM GRIFFIN | AL | 1325 | 1296 | L-11 | W-9 | L-1 | U---- | U---- | 1 |
| 13 | CHRIS GRIFFIN | AL | 1235/05 | 1119/08 | L-2 | L-3 | L-9 | U---- | U---- | 0 |

# Birmingham Chess Scene
# by Steven Dowd

The Birmingham chess scene has been very active, even though we are experiencing a decline in the number of players. Our quick chess events consist mostly of the monthly Olympic Quads, a popular G/10 format in which you play one qualifying round, segregated by rating, followed by a championship or consolation quad. Ozgur Aktunc remains the leader in wins, although Steven Dowd, James Scheuermann, Keith Jakeman, Kyle Therrell, and Scott Varagona have all claimed the crown in recent months as well. We do have other events, such as thematics and training tournaments, but the Olympics remains most popular, with 16-24 players a usual number.

Kirk Petty runs popular slow tournaments on Tuesdays as well. Dowd won the Birmingham Winter Championship, a 3 round slow event, with Petty himself winning the recent Birmingham Blunders. We have about a dozen players show up to these events.

Our weekend tournaments have also gone well, with 2 FMs showing up on a regular basis – Todd Andrews and Stephen Muhammad. Andrews and Joe Jurjevich tied for first in the Henry Bird Open held in February, and Andrews and Muhammad tied for first in the Irish Bear Open. Our numbers are disappointing for "big money tournaments," although we have a lot of strong players showing (as many as one dozen A players!), but very few in the range of 1800-1400. Are these players simply not playing? We offer class prizes of $100, so that should not be the issue.

Our next two tournaments will be the April Showers Open on April 20th, and our traditional 2-day big tournament, the Vulcan, the weekend before Memorial Day weekend. Scott Varagona promises to come back to defend his championship.

For more information on the UABCC, contact me

# 30TH Annual Queen of Hearts

Chess Tournament * February 16-17, 2002 * Montgomery, AL

By: **Caesar Lawrence**

The Queen of Hearts tournament has long been a main stay chess event in the state of Alabama. Montgomery gets to play host to all of those love birds/chess enthusiasts around Valentine's Day.

Todd Andrews took the top honors in the Open section with 4.5 points. In the Reserve section, Robert Rieves played the best of the best and ran away with the title. I know in one of those games,Bob snatched victory from the jaws of defeat. Congratulations to the section winners.

The prize winners:

| **OPEN** | |
|---|---|
| 1st | Todd Andrews |
| 2nd | Gerald Larson |
| Class A | Giles D'Souza |
| 2nd Class A | Keith Jakeman |
| U1800 | Scott Helton |
| 2nd U1800 | Tom Lawry |

| **RESERVE** | |
|---|---|
| 1st | Robert Rieves |
| 2nd | James Bowen |
| Class D | Trae Roush |
| U1000 | Daniel Long |
| 2nd U1000 | James Jackson |

**Congratulations to all of the winners and thanks to all of the players for supporting the QoH!!!**

*Let's Play Chess...*

# QUEEN OF HEARTS (QoH) 2002 - OPEN

| # | PLAYER NAME | ST | PreRate | PstRate | Rd1 | Rd2 | Rd3 | Rd4 | Rd5 | Total | Prize |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | TODD ANDREWS | TN | 2277 | 2280 | W-11 | W-6 | W-2 | W-8 | D-5 | 4.5 | 1st |
| 2 | GERALD LARSON | AL | 2095 | 2108 | W-12 | W-10 | L-1 | W-4 | W-6 | 4 | 2nd |
| 3 | GILES D' SOUZA | AL | 1900 | 1915 | L-4 | W-13 | W-14 | D-5 | W-8 | 3.5 | Class A-1st |
| 4 | BILL MELVIN | AL | 2200 | 2200 | W-3 | L-5 | W-9 | L-2 | W-10 | 3 | |
| 5 | KEITH JAKEMAN | AL | 1930 | 1944 | W-13 | W-4 | L-8 | D-3 | D-1 | 3 | Class A-2nd |
| 6 | KIRK PETTY | AL | 1909 | 1906 | W-14 | L-1 | D-10 | W-9 | L-2 | 2.5 | |
| 7 | TIM BOND | AL | 1898 | 1884 | D-9 | L-8 | H---- | D-10 | W-11 | 2.5 | |
| 8 | THOMAS LAWRY | AL | 1768 | 1798 | H---- | W-7 | W-5 | L-1 | L-3 | 2.5 | U-1800 Tie |
| 9 | SCOTT HELTON | AL | 1765 | 1785 | D-7 | W-11 | L-4 | L-6 | W-14 | 2.5 | U-1800 Tie |
| 10 | GREG WILDER | AL | 1618 | 1635 | B---- | L-2 | D-6 | D-7 | L-4 | 2 | |
| 11 | KENNETH GOODMAN | AL | 1901 | 1875 | L-1 | L-9 | W-13 | D-14 | L-7 | 1.5 | |
| 12 | RHODES PEELE | AL | 1800 | 1778 | L-2 | L-14 | H---- | H---- | D-13 | 1.5 | |
| 13 | ROSS SMITH | AL | 1723 | 1705 | L-5 | L-3 | L-11 | B---- | D-12 | 1.5 | |
| 14 | STEVEN CULLIFER | FL | 0 | 1690/05 | L-6 | W-12 | L-3 | D-11 | L-9 | 1.5 | |

# QUEEN OF HEARTS (QoH) 2002 - RESERVE

| # | PLAYER NAME | ST | PreRate | PstRate | Rd1 | Rd2 | Rd3 | Rd4 | Rd5 | Total | Prize |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ROBERT RIEVES | AL | 1256 | 1496 | B---- | W-4 | W-9 | W-2 | W-3 | 5 | 1st |
| 2 | JAMES BOWEN | AL | 1545 | 1558 | W-11 | W-5 | W-6 | L-1 | D-4 | 3.5 | 2nd |
| 3 | DANIEL LONG | AL | 1259/01 | 1481/06 | L-6 | W-7 | W-4 | W-9 | L-1 | 3 | 1st U-1000 |
| 4 | JASON SELVAGE | AL | 1568 | 1540 | W-8 | L-1 | L-3 | W-10 | D-2 | 2.5 | |
| 5 | JULIANO JOAQUIN | AL | 1490/16 | 1462/21 | W-10 | L-2 | L-8 | D-7 | W-6 | 2.5 | |
| 6 | KEVIN CRISLER | AL | 1420 | 1430 | W-3 | W-9 | L-2 | D-8 | L-5 | 2.5 | |
| 7 | TRAE ROUSH | AL | 1333/25 | 1329 | L-9 | L-3 | W-10 | D-5 | B---- | 2.5 | Class D |
| 8 | JIM GRIFFIN | AL | 1312 | 1343 | L-4 | B---- | W-5 | D-6 | U---- | 2.5 | |
| 9 | MILES MELVIN | AL | 1533 | 1489 | W-7 | L-6 | L-1 | L-3 | W-10 | 2 | |
| 10 | JAMES JACKSON | AL | 0 | 1201/05 | L-5 | W-11 | L-7 | L-4 | L-9 | 1 | 2nd U-1000 |
| 11 | JAMES BROWN | AL | 1464 | 1421 | L-2 | L-10 | U---- | U---- | U---- | 0 | |

# Queen of Hearts Game
# by Gerald A. Larson

Young Nashville master Todd Andrews mowed down all opposition on this beautiful winter weekend in Montgomery, never being in serious danger in any game. Your humble reporter was lucky enough to upset Alabama Champion Bill Melvin in the fourth round. Going into the fifth round the only suspense in the Open Section was the determination of second place, with D'Souza and Petty knotted at 2.5-1.5 and YHR at 3-1. YHR managed to take clear second place on this crucial last-round game, in which both sides make many instructive positional errors

Queen of Hearts Round 5
Gerald Larson (2080)–Kirk Petty (1910)
Modern Defense

**1. e4 g6**
**2. d4 Bg7**
**3. Nc3 c6**
**4. Nf3 d5**
**5. e5 Bg4**
**6. Be2 Qb6?!**
6... h5 is more consistent.
**7. O-O h5**
**8. Na4 Qc7**
**9. b3**
While this is not a bad move, it is a sign that White is starting to drift, already envisioning a middlegame plan to pry open the queenside with c2-c4 and maybe b3-b4-b5. But let's finish the opening, first. Much better is completing development smoothly with 9. Bf4 Nd7 10. Qd2 e6 11. b3. This position is very comfortable for White: he has more space, will eventually win the two bishops, and can easily open the position with c2-c4. A delightful combination of circumstances.
**9. . . e6**
**10. c4**
10. Bf4 or 10. Bg5 are both probably better.
**10. . . Nh6**
**11. Ba3?!**
This is simply a bad idea. Depriving Black of castling, or even undeveloping some of his pieces, is not really important if the center is closed, and this center is very definitely closed. The dark-squared bishop belongs on f4 or g5, where it restrains Black's g-pawn and keeps Black's bishop off of the c1-h6 diagonal.
**11. . . Bf8**
Looking at the position dispassionately and without the clock running, gee, now that the center is locked, e7 is actually a way better square for the bishop than g7, so White just 'forced' Black to play a good move!

**12. Bb2?!**

I was very pleased with myself here, having 'won' two tempi with the previous bishop maneuvers. In reality, I've misplaced my dark-squared bishop, and allowed my opponent to improve his with tempo!

**12. . . Nd7**

12... dxc4? is, of course, a basic positional error. Black is concentrating on closing the position, because he has committed to trading off his light-squared bishop, probably for a knight. In a closed position, Black's remaining knight will be superior to White's opposing bishop. Plus, after 13. bc White has a big pawn center that is now mobile since Black gave up his d-pawn.

**13. cxd5**

Now that the knight cannot get to c6, I resolve the tension. But there is no hurry for this. Unfortunately, the minority attack is difficult to get moving here because my Bb2 gets in the way, and his Nd7 can get to c4 in many lines.

**13. . . exd5**

**14. Rc1 Qd8**

This seems excessively cautious. HIARCS recommends the reasonable continuation 14... Nf5 15. h3 Bxf3 16. Bxf3 Bh6 when I intended 17. Rc2 and right here I realized how badly I had misplaced my dark-squared prelate. The only thing I can do with it in this position is admit the error and plan to trade it for Black's much-superior Bh6 with 18. Bc1.

**15. a3 a6**

**16. Re1 Be7**

**17. Nd2?!**

This is dumb. White must at minimum secure the bishops, but this move trades my good bishop for his bad! 17. h3 is clearly better.

**17. . . Be6?**

Black returns the favor. A knight belongs here. 17... Bxe2 18. Qxe2 O-O? 19. e6! was my 'idea,' but 18…Nf8! turns the tables, and Black has the better prospects.

**18. b4 Bg5**

I became very concerned about the idea ...b7-b5 and ...Nd7-b6-c4, so decide to trade off Black's best piece.

**19. Nc5 Nxc5**

**20. Rxc5**

It is important to take back with a piece on an outpost square. The pawn recapture 20. dxc5? clogs up the outpost.

Kirk now decides to trade off White's best piece, but this yields the two bishops by giving up the good bishop! If killing this knight were in Black's plans, then he should have done it on the 16th move. His dark squares become very weak.

**20. . . Bxd2?!**

**21. Qxd2 Nf5**

**22. Rd1**

Overprotecting the d-pawn is too cautious. Here and for the next several moves I need to get the minority attack going with a2-a4 and b4-b5 while his knight is far from c4.

**22. . . Kd7!?**

I was very surprised by this move. An enterprising idea.

**23. Qc2 Ne7**

**24. Qb3 b6**

**25. Rc3 b5**

**26. a4**

Finally! But almost too late.

**26. . . Qb6**

**27. a5?!**

It is difficult to accept that releasing the tension on the queenside is White's best idea. Much better appears to be 27. Qc2 when

A) 27… Rhb8 28. Ra3! and I'm finally untangling my pieces on the queenside.

B) 27... bxa4 28. Ra3! Qxb4 (28... a5 looks no better after 29. bxa5 Qxa5 30. Bc3 Qa7 31. Rda1 because the position has opened when White has the bishops. Neither Black minor piece has much future.) 29. Rxa4 Qb7 30. Ba3 Rhb8 31. Ra1 and Black is suffering for his pawn. (31. Qc5 Nf5 32. Bd3 may be even better.)

C) 27... Bf5! 28. Qd2! (This move I missed, mainly because it admits that all my moves 22 through 24 were mistakes.) 28...bxa4 29. Ra3 and White seems on top in the complications on the queenside.

**27. . . Qd8**

I expected 27...Qc7 28. Bc1 Bg4 29. f3 Bf5 30. Bg5 Rae8 31. Bf6 Rhg8 and Black is bottled up.

**28. Bc1 Rc8**

**29. Bg5 Qe8**

**30. Rc5?! Kc7!**

White has allowed the Black King to escape to the (closed) queenside. Better was 30. Rdc1 with the idea 30… Nf5 31. Qd1 Qf8 32.Rc5±.

**31.Rdc1**

Too late.

**31. . . Kb7**

**32. Qc2 Nf5**

**33. Qb2**

Spending a tempo defending is not the best way to attack, but White had little choice at this point.

**33. . . Bd7**

**34. R5c2 Ng7**

Black threatens to relocate his knight to e6, which would make it the best minor piece on the board. This simply cannot be permitted.

**35. Bf6 Rg8**

**36. Bxg7 Rxg7**

**37. Qc3**

If White can penetrate to b6 with the Queen, it would be over.

**37. . . Qe7**

**38. Qd2 Rh8**

**39. Bf3 Rc8**

At the time I was worried because 39... g5 seems to seize the initiative. However, 40.Qc3! (HIARCS) generates serious threats of a bishop sac on d5. Forced is 40… Rg6

(40… g4? 41. Bxd5! cd 42. Qc7+ Ka8 43. Rc6 wins) 41. Qb3 (41. Bxd5? cd 42. Qc7+ Ka8 43. Rc6 fails to 43… Rc8!) and White still restrains 41… g4? with the threat of 42. Bxd5.

**40. Rc5 f6?!**

White still has more space and slightly more active pieces, so opening lines seems like a bad idea.

**41. Qf4?!**

Weakens the back rank and misplaces the Queen. Either 41. Re1 or 41.Qe3 (HIARCS) are better.

**41. . . fxe5?**

Opening the a7-g1 diagonal is very bad since Black has to worry about threats of Queen penetration for the rest of the game. After 41... Rf7! 42. Bxd5? is tempting but fails to the simple 42... cxd5 43. exf6 Rxc5! Instead 42. Qe3 doesn't walk into the trap, but 42… h4 allows Black to start minimizing his problems by getting pawns off of light squares and toward White's King.

**42. dxe5 Be6**
**43. Qd4 Qd8**
**44. R5c3 Rf7**
**45. Be2 g5!?**

Although in the end this just tosses a pawn, it is difficult to criticize because otherwise Black must just grovel, especially in view of White's obvious plan to improve his position and attack on both wings with 43. h4 and 44. Rg3. At least the text gets some activity and poses problems for White.

**46. Bxh5 Rf4**
**47. Qc5 Rc4**
**48. Rxc4 bxc4**
**49. Be2!**

This restrains Black's dangerous connected-passed pawns and cements a White advantage.

**49. . . Qc7**
**50. Rc3 Rd8**

50... Qxe5? 51. Qb6+ Ka8 52. Qxa6+ Kb8 53. Qb6+ Ka8 54. a6! is an example of how careful Black must be in the face of White's threats of Queen penetration near his King.

**51. Qd4**

Now the connected-passers are immobilized unless Black blows open the position around his King. If Black does nothing to attempt counterplay, White will break the blockade with 52. h3 and 53. Bg4, resulting in double threats of penetration via Rc3-h3-h5 and of pushing the e-pawn after Rc3-e3.

**51. . . c5**
**52. bxc5 Qxa5**
**53. h3 Kc6**
**54. Bf3! Qxc5??**

Bad moves are easy to find in difficult positions during time trouble.

**55. Rxc4 1-0**

# Huntsville's e-mail adventures
# Clubs against clubs – Huntsville versus Italy

## By Bill Melvin

The Huntsville Chess Club has successfully defeated two other clubs 2-0 in club e-mail matches. We won a match against Scacchistica Partenopea (Italy) in 1996 and a match against Tuscaloosa in 2000. We currently are playing the Nimzo Friends Chess Club (Agropoli, Italy) and Birmingham. Below is the first game to finish in those matches. It is probably our best effort to date.

The backbone of our e-mail team would surprise most folks. With Frank Camaratta, Gerald Larson and myself on the team, one might guess that everyone would simply go along with our choices. Nothing could be further from the truth. Two Class B players are the heart and soul of the team: Greg Funaro and Roger McIntyre. Both use databases during openings and perform highly detailed analysis during the games to prove their points. To convince a group of peers, intuition doesn't go very far. Detailed analysis rules the day often going 10-20 moves deep. Critical reviews of such analysis helps us to play our very best.

I'll go light on the notes below. The variations we analysed could easily fill a large chapter in a book.

Nimzo Friends Chess Club (Italy) vs. Huntsville Chess Club
Club vs. club postal game played during 2001

1. e4 e6

We choose a different opening in all of our e-mail games. We had already played a Caro-Kann against Tuscaloosa. Choosing different openings each time is educational for the whole club.

2. Qe2 c5
3. f4 Nc6
4. Nf3 Be7
5. d3 d5

White's opening choice was a bit eccentric. 2. Qe2 forces black out of book (in over the board play, anyway) and discourages 2. … d5 as 3. exd5 Qxd5 4. Nc3 forces the black queen to lose time. As we show in this game, however, normal developing moves allow black to play … d5 soon enough and the white queen can be awkward on e2.

6. e5 h5

Although we had some similar database games, we were pretty much out of book already. White already has positional problems. Their pawn structure lacks fluidity and we decided to take our time and try to clamp down on the light squares. The club was not in 100% agreement with 6. … h5 as many members felt that it would be a long-term kingside weakness. Others had experience in similar positions and felt that it would bind white positionally.

7. g3 Nh6
8. Bh3 b5

Black switches theatres of attack. It was too early to commit the knight to f5 or g4. The f5 and g4 squares were sufficiently guarded and we felt we had a free hand to expand on the queenside.

9. Nc3 Qb6
10. Nd1 Bb7

White gradually gets a worse position and gets ground down. It is hard to pinpoint the exact losing move. While moves like 10. Nd1 don't inspire confidence, white can't play 10. Be3 (due to 10. … d4) and doesn't want to commit the king yet with 10. O-O. Such positions are very hard to play.

11. c3 d4
12. Bd2 Rd8

The club debated endlessly on the timing of every move. Committal moves like 11. … d4 were always fought over.

13. O-O Ng4
14. Nf2 c4

It is hard to imagine a chess position with more dynamic potential. White has no fewer than 5 captures to consider in this position. We had long variations prepared for each move. Furthermore, we had all of this prepared several moves in advance.

15. cxd4 Nxd4
16. Nxd4 Qxd4
17. Bg2 …

We gave our opponents a lot of credit for this move. All other moves lost instantly. Variations like 17. Bc3 cxd3 18. Qd2 Qd5 19. Nxg4 hxg4 20. Bg2 Bc5 21. Kh1 Ke7 22. Bxd5 Bxd5 23. Qg2 Rxh2 24. Kxh2 Rh8 25. Qh3 Rxh3 mate are a lot of fun.

17. … cxd3
18. Qe1 Bxg2

19. Kxg2 Qxb2

This move was painful for us to make. Sure, we are up two pawns with a winning position. But, we wanted checkmate and had spent a lot of time on 19. … Bb4 planning to answer 20. Bxb4 with 20. … Ne3. But, we found an obscure defense (starting with 20. Bc3 I believe) and decided the other position was clearer.

20. Qc1 Qc2
21. Nxg4 hxg4
22. Qxc2 dxc2
23. Rf2 Rc8
24. Be3 Rc3
25. Re2 O-O
26. Rc1 Rfc8
27. Bd4 Ba3
28. Bxc3 Bxc1
29. Rxc2 Ba3
30. Resigns

0 - 1

White has no defense against … Bb4 winning an Exchange.

# 6. … Bg7 against the Levenfish Sicilian: Blunder or Equality?

## By Bill Melvin

I have been playing against the Sicilian Dragon for almost two decades now. Since I am more a tactician than a positional player it has never been hard for me to find a variation against the Dragon and I have a few that I employ from time to time.

Early on, I dismissed the Levenfish variation (1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 g6 6. f4) entirely. The books listed just about every line as being equal which I presumed to indicate dull and boring. Nothing could be further from the truth. While reading "Three Steps to Chess Mastery" by A. S. Suetin (Pergamon Press 1982) I came upon the following three paragraphs:

"Since the time of the game Levenfish – I. Rabinovich (11th USSR Championship, 1939) it has been known that after 1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 g6 6. f4 the continuation 6. … Bg7? is unsatisfactory (6. … Nc6 or 6. … Nbd7 is correct), since White can make a very strong central breakthrough – 7. e5! dxe5 8. fxe5, and both after 8. … Nfd7 9. e6!, and after 8. … Nd5 9. Bb5+ Kf8 10. O-O! White wins virtually by force."

"Although since the time of this game more than 30 years has passed, the number of people who fall into this trap, which is meticulously recorded in literally all the opening guides, does not decrease."

"Not long ago, in the USSR Team Championship in Riga (1968), in the game Shiyanovsky – Rumyantsev, Black, not suspecting any danger, played 6. … Bg7?, and after 7. e5 dxe5 8. fxe5 Nd5 9. Bb5+ Kf8 10. O-O Bxe5 11. Bh6+ Kg8 12. Nxd5 Qxd5 13. Nf5 Qc5+ 14. Be3 resigned. This game had a number of predecessors, two of which were Olifer – Levitan (1959) and Schwartz – Markwardt (Berlin 1950). In the first of these the moves 14. … Qc7 15. Nh6+ were made, while in the second Black struggled on until mate: 15. … Kg7 16. Rxf7 mate!"

The sharp variation ending with 16. Rxf7 mate appears very forcing and definitely caught my attention. Could it be possible that a natural looking move like 6. … Bg7 could really be so bad? I don't know of any players around Alabama who play the Levenfish against the Dragon, so this analysis could lead to easy points.

Yet, I still had to contend with the opening books giving an evaluation of equality in all lines. The lines above certainly didn't look dull. Here are the opening books I consulted:

Encyclopedia of Chess Openings – 2nd Edition (1984) [ECO2 in notes]
Encyclopedia of Chess Openings – 3rd Edition (1997) (2nd Edition is much better!) [ECO3 in notes]
Batsford Chess Openings 2 (1989) (former best one volume reference) [BCO2 in notes]
Nunn's Chess Openings (1999) (current best one volume reference) [NCO in notes]
Modern Chess Openings – 14 (1999) [MCO in notes]
Sicilian Dragon: Classical and Levenfish Variations by Laszlo Sapi and Attila Schneider (1990) [S&S in notes]

The first task was to check to see where black went wrong in the above game. The books all agree that 8. … Nd5 is the loser. MCO also shows that 8. … Ng4 loses in a pretty fashion to 9. Bb5 Kf8 10. Ne6 winning the queen. All sources give 8. … Nfd7 as the best move for black. The variation the sources seem to love is: 8. … Nfd7 9. e6 Ne5 10. Bb5+ Nec6 (10. … Nbc6 11. exf7+ Kxf7 12. O-O+ is supposed to give white a slight edge) 11. exf7+ Kf8 12. Nxc6 Qxd1+ 13. Nxd1 Nxc6 14. c3 Be6 15. O-O Bf6 16. Nf2 Kf7 with equality in Dzafarov – Gusseinov, corr. 1975. With the worser pawn structure and king safety, it is hard to indicate this position as being 100% equal. MCO gives a dissenting opinion as it stops at 13. Nxd1 and claims white has a small advantage. It seems unlikely black could find the maneuver 8. … Nfd7, 9. … Ne5, 10. … Nec6 over the board. I like white's practical chances in this line. Equality? Maybe, but a prepared white player will score well over 50% against equal strength opposition.

Another curiosity is given in 7. … Nh5. At first I thought this move was ridiculous and losing a piece after 8. g4, but black has 8. … Nxf4 to answer. The main line against 7. … Nh5 runs 8. Bb5 Bd7 9. e6 fxe6 10. Nxe6 Bxc3+ 11. bxc3 Qc8 12. Bxd7+ Kxd7 13. Ng5 Qxc3+ 14. Bd2 Qc4 15. Rb1 with an even/unclear position in Conquest – Watson, London 1989. Again MCO gives a dissenting opinion with 9. Qe2!? Bxb5 10. Ndxb5 a6 11. Na3 with a slight edge for white according to Mittelman.

Okay, so if we were really to use the Levenfish against the Dragon all we would lack is variations against 6. … Nbd7 and 6. … Nc6. Here is what the books say about 6. … Nbd7: 7. Nf3 Bg7 8. Bc4 Nb6 9. Bb3 O-O 10. Be3 with an unclear position in Hecht – Whiteley, Nice (ol) 1974. In this line, S&S claims 10. O-O leads to a slight edge for white and gives the game M. Perez-Ali, Singapore, 1969: 10. O-O Bd7 11. Qe2 Bc6 12. Rd1 Qc7 13. a4! Rad8 14. Nd5 Bxd5 15. exd5 Nbd7 16. Nd4 Nc5 17. Nb5 Qb8 18. Bc4 Nfe4 19. Ra3! as leading to a big white advantage due to a superior pawn structure, bishop pair, and active rook on the third rank. I'm not sure I agree with this assessment. MCO offers 7. Be2 Bg7 8. O-O O-O 9. Bf3 a6 10. Nb3 Nb6 11. a4! Be6 12. a5 Nc4 13. g4 as leading to a slight edge for white. That position sure looks fun to play.

All this leads us to the main variation for black: 6. … Nc6. MCO claims a white edge in all other lines and gives it an "!" S&S also gives it an "!" All of the other sources devote more analysis to the move than the others. NCO and ECO2 give as the main line: 6. … Nc6 7. Nxc6 bxc6 8. e5 Nd7 9. exd6 exd6 10. Be3 Nf6 11. Qd2 Bg7 12.

O-O-O d5 13. Bc5 Be6 14. a3 Nd7 15. Bd4 Bxd4 16. Qxd4 Qf6 with equality according to Geller. I'm not sure black is 100% equal in the final position.

BCO2 and ECO3 opt for unclear in the line 6. … Nc6 7. Nxc6 bxc6 8. e5 Nd7 9. exd6 exd6 10. Be3 Be7 11. Qd2 O-O 12. O-O-O Nb6 13. Be2 d5 14. h4 h5 15. g4 Bxg4 16. Bxg4 Nc4 17. Qd3 Qb8 18. b3 in Larsen-Lein, Lone Pine 1979. S&S shows why the analysis was cut short in Larsen-Lein in the other sources as that game continued: 18. … Ba3+? 19. Kb1 Re8 20. Bd4 Nb2 21. Qd2 hxg4 22. f5! Nxd1 23. Qh6! and white is checkmating. Instead, black must try 18. … Nxe3 19. Qxe3 Re8 20. Kb1 Bf6 with chances for both sides according to Minic and Sindik. These double-edged positions are fun to prepare with a computer and can be a minefield for an unwary opponent. S&S, however, claims that 11. … Nf6 12. O-O-O Be6 13. Bd3 Qa5! leads to an advantage for black, so some more analysis may be necessary.

Last, but not least, is the dissenting opinion of MCO. Claiming a white edge in all other lines, it gives the following as black's chance at equality: 6. … Nc6! 7. Nxc6 bxc6 8. e5 Nd7 9. exd6 exd6 10. Be3 Be7! 11. Qf3 d5 12. O-O-O O-O 13. g4 Bf6 in Tarjan-Timman, Venice 1974. Note that 11. Qf3 is given over 11. Qd2 because de Firmian (editor of 14th edition) believes black to be better in the Larsen-Lein variation. In other words, he thinks white needs to play 11. Qf3 to achieve equality.

So, what do I think? Any player who plays over the above variations a few times and tries them out against a computer should have a huge advantage in a surprise attempt against an unsuspecting rival. This will probably score 80% or better in the initial attempt and at least 50% or better once the surprise wears off.

While 6. … Bg7 is no longer considered a theoretical blunder, the Levenfish is definitely not a dull drawing line. In practical play, Suetin's evaluation of 6. … Bg7? may still be correct.

# Puckett Invitational by Steven Dowd

Matthew Puckett has come up with a most interesting idea in the spirit of Advanced chess and other chess variants : Puckettchess. In Puckettchess, all players are essentially playing a timed simul against each other. It is a round robin in which all games are played at once! In October, Matthew invited players from around Alabama to participate with the following results:

## Puckett Invitational Cross Table

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1 Melvin, Bill (2225)** | X | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| **2 Puckett, Matthew (2182)** | 0 | X | ½ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3½ |
| **3 Reeder, Andy (2103)** | 1 | ½ | X | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3½ |
| **4 Meidinger, Charles (2155)** | 0 | 0 | 1 | X | ½ | 1 | 2½ |
| **5 Aktunc, Ozgur (1986)** | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | X | ½ | 1 |
| **6 Scheuermann, James (1814)** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | X | ½ |

The following is one game from the event:

White: Melvin, Bill (2225) Black: Puckett, Matthew (2182)

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd 4. Nxd4 e5 5. Nb5 d6 6. Bg5!? Qxg5 7. Nc7+ Kd8 8. Nxa8 b6 9. Nc3 Bb7 10. Nxb6 axb6 11. h4 Qg6 12. Qd2 Nd4 13. 0-0-0 Bxe4 14. Nxe4 Qxe4 15. Bc4 Nf6 16. Rhe1 Qxg2 17. c3 Qc6 18. Qd3 Nf3 19. Re3 Nxh4 20. Rxe5 Ng6 21. Ree1 Kc7 22. Bb5 Qc5 23. b4 Qg5+ 24. Kb2 Qf4 25. a4 Be7 26. a5 bxa 27. Ra1 axb4 28. Ra7+ Kb8 29. Ra8+ Kb7 30. Bc6+ Kxc6 31. Qa6+ Kc5 32. Qa5+ Kc4 33. Qxb4+ Kd3 34. Qb5+ Qc4 35. Re3+ 1-0

# David Hayes and Some of His Games
# by Steven Dowd

David Hayes is well known as one of our state's advocates of … ummmm … unusual openings. Although I have had the pleasure of "whipping up" on David's Grob, he has also beaten some of our best masters with this opening, in rated games. I like those folks who play unusual openings because I think, like Tartakower of the past, and Johnny Hector of today, they represent our "chess artists." They are always trying to play games that are creative, rather than conforming to form. As John Stuart Mill noted in On Liberty (1859): Persons of genius are, *ex vi termini*, more individual than any other people--less capable, consequently, of fitting themselves, without hurtful compression, into any of the small number of moulds which society provides in order to save its members the trouble of forming their own character. Enjoy here some of David's creativity, annotations by David.

Here is one of David's Grobs, played against an anonymous Internet opponent:

1. g4 {A00: Irregular Openings} 1... d5 2. Bg2 Bxg4 3. c4 c6 4. cxd5 cxd5 5. Nc3 e6?? {More common and accurate is 5... Nf6 6. Qb3 Nbd7 7. Nxd5 effectively trading a center pawn for a flank pawn.} 6. Qa4+ Nc6 7. Qxg4 {Despite being down in material, black has some compensation. Black owns the center, and can develop rapidly. White cannot afford the luxury of castling.} 7... Nf6 8. Qa4 Bd6 9. Nf3 O-O 10. d4 e5 {Black is down material and now hopes to break open the center for an attack on white's uncastled King.} 11. dxe5 Nxe5 12. Bg5 Re8 13. Nxd5! Nd3+ 14. Kf1 Nc5 15. Qh4 Be7 16. Nxf6+ Bxf6 17. Bxf6 gxf6 18. Rg1 Kh8 19. Bh3 Rxe2 {A trap! Now the greedy 20. Kxe2?? is punished with mate by 20... Qd3+ 21. Ke1 Re8+ etc.} 20. Bf5 {Who's afraid of the big bad Rook.} 20... Re1+ {No better is 20... Rxf2+ 21. Kxf2.} 21. Rxe1 {A demonstration by white that there is no real need to castle.} 1-0

Here is a much more traditional game by David that shows his talent in positional chess and tactics; from the 1993 Golden Knights. His opponent (black) is Brian Murrell, a postal expert.

1. d4 {E87: King's Indian: Saemisch: 6...e5 7 d5} 1... Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. f3 {This move controls g4 preventing a timely attack by Nf6-g4 after white posts his Bishop on e3 and Queen on d2.} 5... O-O 6. Be3 e5 7. d5 Nh5 8. Qd2 f5 9. O-O-O a6 {With this move, black prepares a Queen side pawn storm beginning with b5. Therefore, Nge2 is unacceptable now because it blocks the Bishop on f1. So how is the King's Knight to develop? Black should have locked up the King side first with 9... f4.} 10. exf5 gxf5 11. Bh6 Nd7 12. Bxg7 Nxg7 13. f4! {Making way for the Knight to go to f3.} 13... Qf6 14. Nf3 {The Knight develops to its ideal square on f3. Black opts to block the center and gain space with 14... e4. However, this leaves an excellent hole on d4, and is inconsistent with black's

plans for an early b5.} 14... e4 15. Nd4 Re8 16. Qe3 {The e-pawn has become dangerous and must be blockaded ala Nimzovich.} 16... Nf8 {The losing move. This Knight could have supported a Queen side attack against the white King by moving to c5 instead. Now black's position is passive. White can build his position without fear of counter play by black.} 17. h3 Ng6 18. Be2 h5 19. Rdf1 h4?! {Where is this Pawn going?} 20. Rhg1 Kf7 {Black's King feels the heat of white's Rook through 3 pieces!} 21. g4 hxg3 22. Rxg3 Rh8 23. Rfg1 Rh6 24. Nxe4! {Finally, the position is good enough for a piece sacrifice. This blow rocks the tower around black's King. Space does not permit the documentation of every variation, so here is the anticipated main line. 24... fxe4 25. f5! Bxf5 26. Qxh6 Qxd4 27. Rxg6 Bxg6 28. Qxg6+ Kf8 29. h4! Qe3+ 30. Kb1 Qd4 forced 31. h5 where the h-pawn demonstrates its royal ambition.} 24... Qh4 25. Ng5+ Kf6 26. Nge6 {Perhaps even stronger is 26. Ndf3 where 26... Qxf4 leads to mate in 5, and 26... Qh5 is just as ugly after 27. Qc3+.} 26... Nxe6 27. Nxe6 Bd7 28. Rxg6+ {Holding a knife against the King's throat, I announce a mate in eight that can be delayed only by the sacrifice of his Queen.} 1-0